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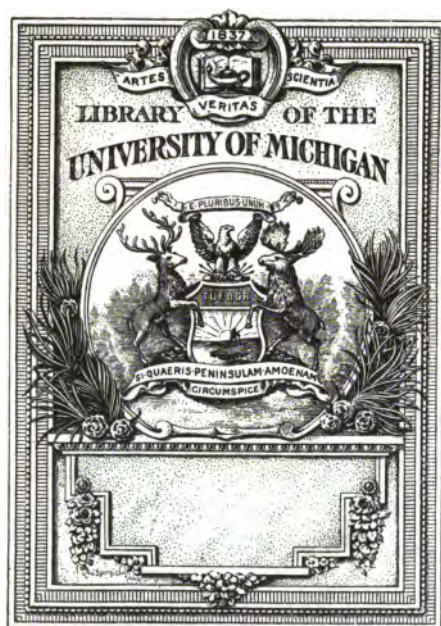
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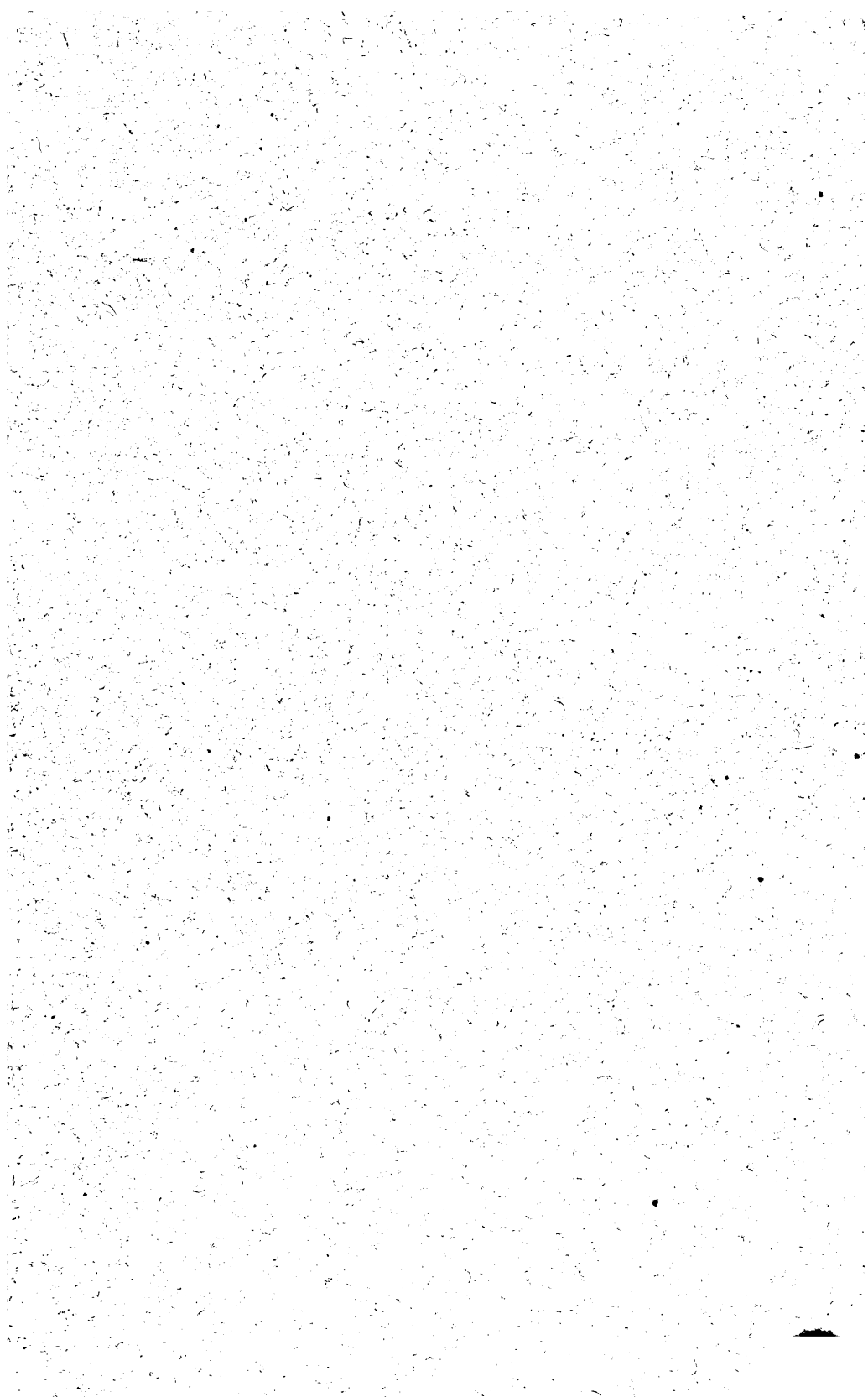
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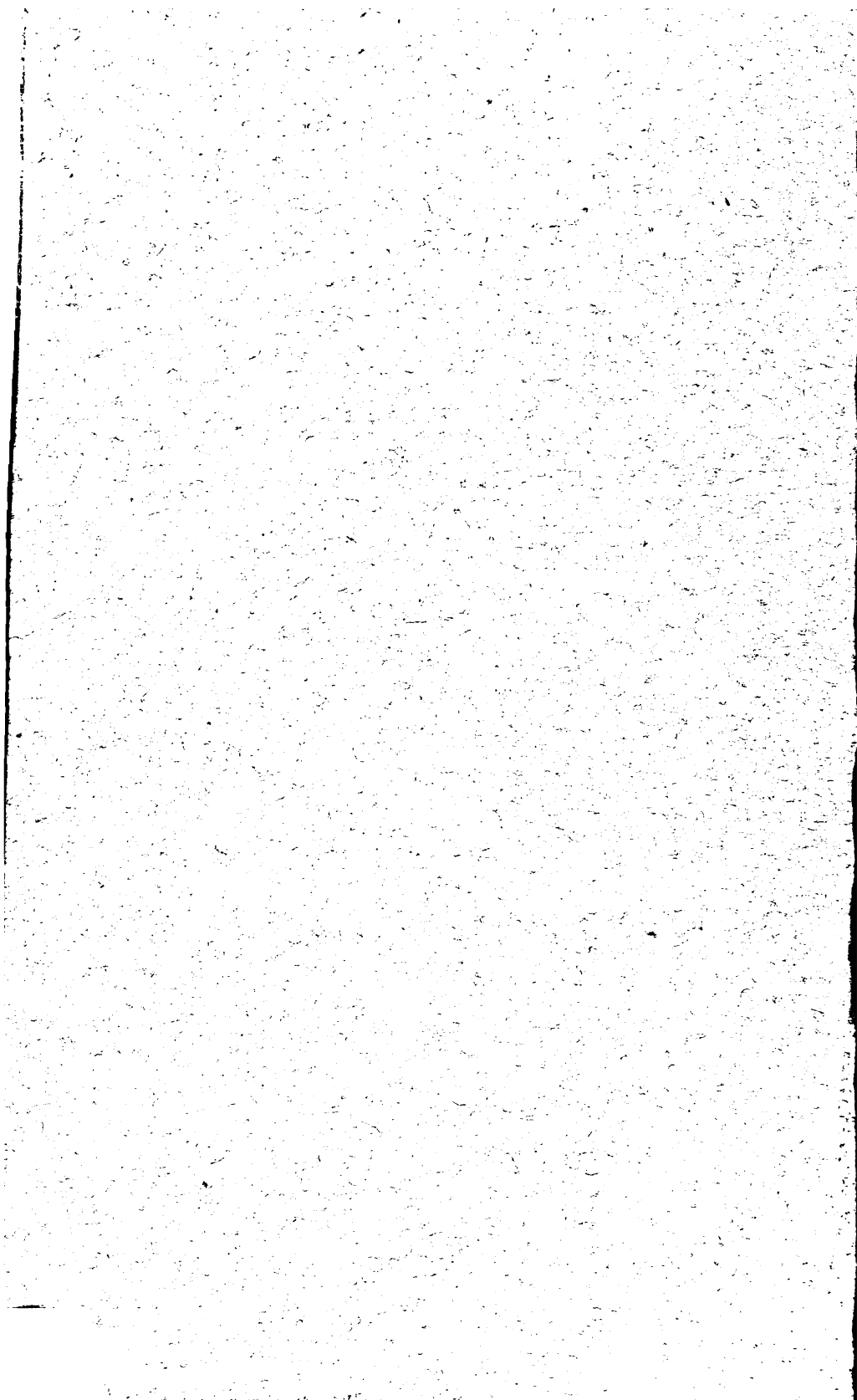
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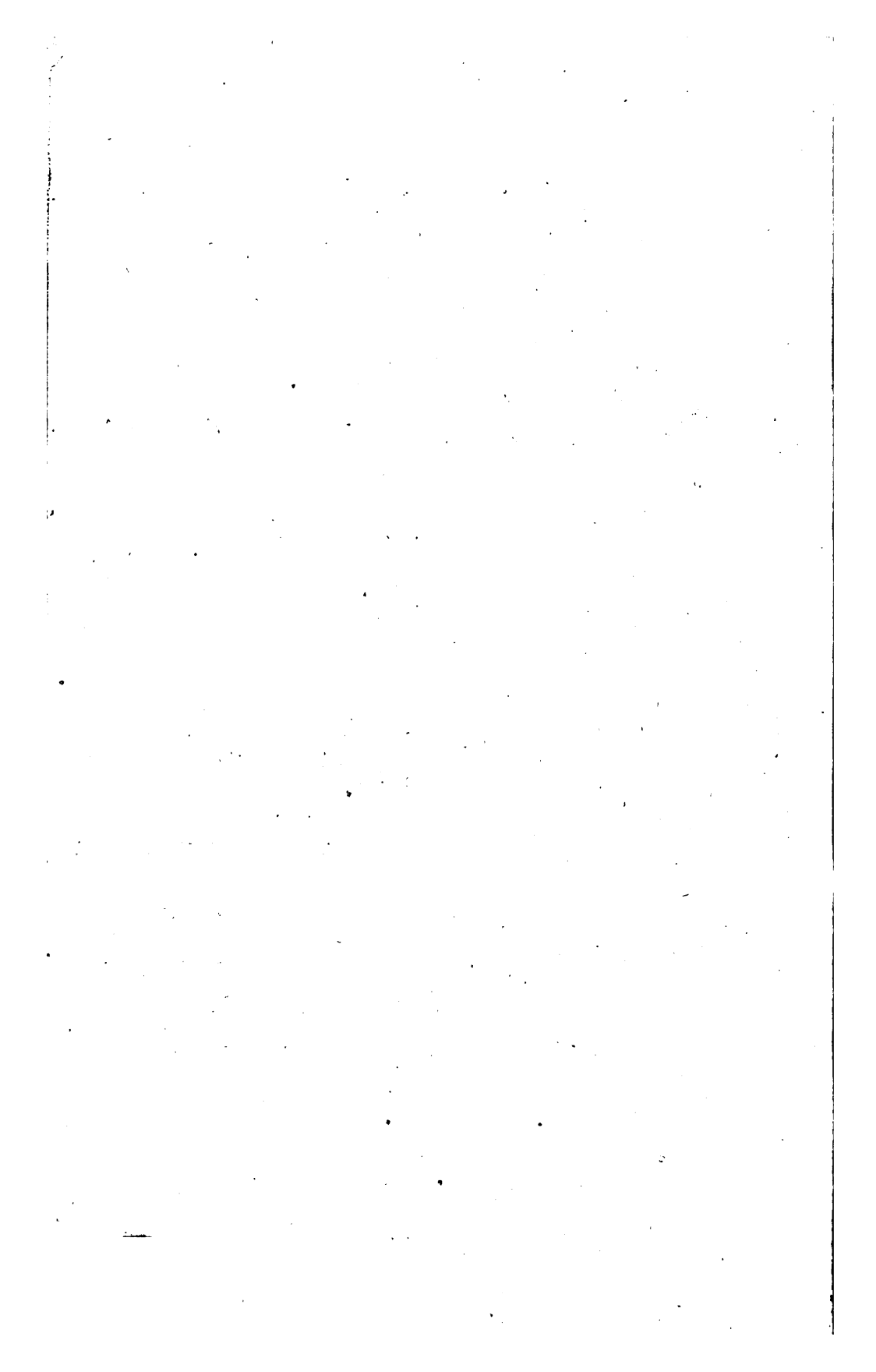




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MR. GREEN'S

Dedication Sermon.



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THE GRAND THEME OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.

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SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE DEDICATION

OF

THE TRINITARIAN CHURCH,

IN

CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS,

DEC. 6, 1826.

34p

BY SAMUEL GREEN,

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SERMON.

1 COR. I. 23, 24.

WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED, UNTO THE JEWS A STUMBLING BLOCK, AND UNTO THE GREEKS FOOLISHNESS; BUT UNTO THEM WHO ARE CALLED, BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS, CHRIST THE POWER OF GOD, AND THE WISDOM OF GOD.

PAUL'S soul was deeply imbued with the spirit of the gospel. His one grand object, of which he never lost sight, from the hour of his conversion to the hour of his death, was to display the glory of Christ in rescuing from sin and its eternal consequences, the greatest possible number of his fellow men. The moment his eyes were opened upon the divine mysteries of the cross, the luxury of wealth, the splendor of courts, and the trump of worldly fame, lost all their charms.

What is my hope, says he to the Thessalonian converts, what is my hope amidst all these labors? Am I expecting to amass wealth, or reach some post of human power and distinction? What is it which renders me joyful amidst all my re-

proaches and persecutions ? To what do I look as the highest consummation of my felicity ? What is that bright vision which constantly animates and supports me, and on which I continually fix my eye as the crown of my bliss ? Is it not, that by preaching Jesus Christ, and him crucified, I may present your souls faultless before our Lord Jesus Christ, at his appearing to judge the world ? Taught from heaven, every other object, than the glory of God in the salvation of men, was comparatively insignificant ; and every means of attaining this, other than a faithful exhibition of Christ crucified, utterly vain. This theme was illustrious in its manifestation of divine wisdom, and omnipotent in making men holy and happy.

The words which have been announced, furnish us with three most important topics :

I. The grand theme of the gospel ministry.

II. The manner in which it is treated by the world.

III. Its efficacy in saving men.

Christ crucified is the grand theme of the gospel ministry. What theme more exalted ! Whilst we pursue the discussion, it will be imparting inspiration to the songs of unnumbered millions in God's temple above. O, for the views and feelings of those blest spirits who see not through a glass darkly, but behold the Lamb of God face to face !

A moment's survey would show us that a place of the greatest prominence and importance is assign-

ed it throughout the bible. It stood forth in the most striking features of the Jewish ritual. What mean the various washings and purifications, the sprinkling of the blood upon the altar and upon the people, the high priest in his pontifical robes entering the most holy place with the blood of beasts ? Did they not point the devout Jew to the future Messiah who was to shed his blood for the priesthood and for the people ? Consult the writer to the Hebrews. His testimony is most decisive, “that the priests who offered gifts according to the law, served unto the *example and shadow of heavenly things* ; that the *tabernacle was a figure* for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices which could not make him who did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience ; that the law had *a shadow of good things to come*, and not the very image of those things.”*

This theme not only supplied the shadows of the law with meaning, but gave animation to the *visions*, and eloquence to the *tongues* of the prophets.—When Isaiah through the glass of prophecy catches a glimpse of the Messiah’s future birth-day, as if one of the seraphim had touched his lips, he rapturously exclaims, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.” Again, as though an eye witness of his reproach, his sufferings in the gar-

* Heb. 8 : 4. 9 : 9. 10 : 1.

den and on the cross,—as if beholding the darkness which overspread the crucifixion of his Lord, and feeling the mighty earthquake, he strikes a mournful chord, and celebrates his death. “He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities: oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.”* David feels the inspiration of the same exalted theme; “his heart indites a good matter, his tongue is the pen of a ready writer.”

“O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!” said Christ as he journeyed with his disciples to Emmaus. “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”† How could he expound to them in all the scriptures things relating to himself, unless in all these different portions of the Old Testament there were prophecies and types of his death and resurrection? And before the sacred canon closes, an angel is sent from heaven to add his testimony, and declare, “The *spirit of prophecy* is the *testimony of Jesus*.”

In every sanctuary where the gospel is faithfully preached, this vast theme is not only dwelt upon with delight, but the wonders of grace and truth

* Isaiah 53 : 7.

† Luke 24 : 25.

which it contains, are developed ; its various branches are defined, and their numerous bearings on each other, and on all the great doctrines of religion and duties of life, are pointed out and enforced.

In no place is "Christ crucified" preached, unless his *true character and atonement* ^{are} distinctly exhibited. These two doctrines lie prominently on the face of the text. The efficacy of his death must involve the dignity and worth of his person. Paul preached "Christ crucified."—How ? as a martyr attesting by his blood the truth of his instructions ? No ; Christ *died for our sins*. His own self "*bare our sins* in his own body on the tree."* The language of the Bible, when speaking of the death of Christ, is altogether peculiar. Who can observe the stress which Paul and the other apostles every where lay upon the death of Christ, without feeling that he was something besides a *martyr* ? In speaking of martyrs, do we say, *they died for the sins of the world* ; that they were a *propitiation for the sins of the world* ; that they *redeem men to God by their blood* ; *wash them by their blood* ; men receive remission of sins through their blood ? Should we say of Paul and of Polycarp, they are the *believers' life* ; *their blood cleanseth from all sin* ; they have *redeemed* men from the *curse* of the law ; they are the *end* of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth ? If the bias of an unbelieving heart has sometimes tortured this language into

* 1 Cor. 15 : 8. 1 Peter 2 : 24.

some such application, the simplicity and truth of the bible surely *never did intend it*.

Where Christ is preached, his *glorious character* is faithfully described, and much dwelt upon. If he is truly *divine*, they who hold him up as a *created, dependent being*, do not preach Christ; it is merely a *dependent creature* which they preach. And did Stephen pray to a creature? Will you commit your soul, and all your dearest interests for eternity into the hands of a dependent creature? Does a creature say, "I am he who searcheth the reins and hearts?"* Is such an one to weigh the motives of the whole human family, and apportion the rewards of eternity? Around the throne of *created frailty and dependence*, do the hundred and forty and four thousand raise their loftiest shouts of adoration? Not higher is the throne of the Eternal above a worm of the dust, than are their views who preach Christ, as God manifest in the flesh, above theirs who represent him but as a man. The one, when he speaks of Christ has in his eye, *Him who thought it not robbery to be equal with God*; the other, a *man*, or a being *created* and wholly *dependent*. The difference is *infinite*, and so will be the *consequences*.

The Holy Ghost aware that there would be controversies, in such an unbelieving world, about the person and offices of Christ, directs Paul to record the description he gave of him. Accordingly we

* Rev. 2: 23.

find it written, "Unto the Son he saith, thy throne, O God, is forever and ever!"* "Whose are the fathers—and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all God blessed forever."† Bringing to view his original divine nature, and that miracle of love and condescension, by which he was united with flesh and blood, it is again recorded, "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh—preached unto the gentiles—received up into glory."‡ Every thing short of these views of Christ and his atonement eclipses the glory of the gospel, and falls infinitely below the high and holy theme of Paul.

Man's condition as a sinner, is a third prominent feature in this grand theme; one which is solemnly and faithfully exhibited, and urged home on men's consciences in every sanctuary where the gospel is preached in its purity and power. This doctrine is on the very face of the gospel. The gospel comes to us as to creatures in moral ruin. Its very *provisions* imply that we are poor and wretched. Its *offers of pardon and deliverance* bear on their front decisive proofs that we are sinners, and under the condemning curse of the divine law.

In the person of Christ you have the *physician*, in his atonement, the *remedy*; and, to say there is no moral disease, no destroying malady of the soul, would be to declare them both unmeaning. To deny the lapsed state of man, and his consequent ex-

* Heb. 1:8

† Rom. 9:5.

‡ 1 Tim. 3:16.

posure to the wrath of his offended Maker, would be to stamp *futility* on the whole plan of salvation.

Humbling as is this view of man's lost condition, it was much, and with great plainness, dwelt upon by Paul. To the Ephesians he declares, "Ye were, by nature, *children of wrath* even as *others*." To the Corinthians; "we thus judge, if one died for all, then were *all dead*."

Just as you take away from the *character* of Christ, or the *atonement*, or the *depth* of man's *moral ruin*, you take away from all three of these doctrines; you diminish their importance in view of all intelligent beings. The greatness and efficacy of the atonement must be in proportion to the *worth* and *dignity* of the *offering*; and the greater the expense of humiliation and of suffering we see demanded in the procurement of man's redemption, the deeper do we justly conclude is that abyss of guilt and wretchedness into which he was plunged. Let the sophistry of unbelief say what it may, the *glory of Christ's person*, the *salvation* procured by his death, and the *moral ruin* of man, will measure each other.

I might point out yet other truths comprehended in this exalted theme, and with which I trust this house will from Sabbath to Sabbath resound; but time is wanting. Indeed, what doctrine of the bible or duty of life, does not gather additional illustration and enforcement from the cross of Christ? This is to the whole book of God's revealed will



what the sun is to this world. What would the bible be to us if every vestige of Christ were struck out of it? only a transcript of that *irresistible* frown with which an offended God looked upon fallen angels. "I am," says Christ, "the light of the world." The only sun in the moral universe from which one genial ray falls upon the hard and dreary heart of man. Without Christ crucified, the bible could do no more than point out the path and shorten the distance to the prison of eternal night.

II. I will now show you in what manner this theme, so full of grace and truth, has been treated by the world.

But, will not the proclamation of such glad tidings be hailed with universal joy by the children of men? Will not the song of angels which announces the birth of Christ, meet with responsive emotions on earth, and all its families, without a jarring note, re-echo to heaven the song, "glory to God in the highest," that dying, guilty worms are become the objects of such abounding mercy? Is it possible that a salvation which brings a balm for every wound, liberty for the captives; that would put forth the hand of mercy and wipe the tear from every child of sorrow, and direct the eye of despondency to the full visions of God and the Lamb; that reaches the perishing mortal on the very borders of hell, and elevates him to a throne in glory; is it possible that it will not be hailed with transports of joy by the whole earth?

Let an inspired apostle testify: "**We preach Christ crucified, unto the *Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.***" Incredible as this fact might seem to a being unacquainted with the depravity of man, dark and dreadful as is the feature with which it stamps that depravity, the whole world set itself in battle array against this very gospel.

Is further evidence demanded? I appeal to those parables of our Lord, whose express design was to show how his communications of truth and grace were received by the men of this world. The vineyard will occur to you as in point.—Last of all the lord sent his well beloved son, saying, the husbandmen will reverence my son. A most reasonable expectation! But was it realized? No; the appearance of his son just completed the climax of their ingratitude and rebellion. The provisions of the gospel are compared to a supper made by a king for his son. How are the invitations received? Do the servants find a willing and a ready heart? Is aught heard the world around, but, "I pray thee have me excused?" I might multiply proofs on this point, but who does not know that the preachers of Christ crucified constituted a sect every where spoken against? Though they bore a message fraught with blessings infinitely richer than all the treasures of the earth, and combining a more illustrious display of the perfections of the blessed God than all the universe beside, yet how few received them into their

houses, or bid them God speed!—none indeed, save those whose hearts were touched by all-subduing grace. The cities of Greece and Rome could tolerate their ten thousand idol gods and their attendant priests, but insult, bonds and death, await, in every city, those who faithfully preach Christ crucified.

Does a faithful exhibition of the gospel at the present day, meet with essentially the same unwelcome reception? or has the withering hand of time dried up the fountain of human hostility? What reason have we to look for such a transformation? The grand theme of the faithful minister is the same. But have not the world become more enlightened? Indeed they have. But their opposition and contempt in the days of our Saviour were not owing to the want of light. This point Christ decided; “Ye have both *seen* and hated both me and my Father. If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin.” Their light was sufficient to remove all ground of extenuation.

But might not all the opposition to the gospel in the case of the Greeks and other heathen nations, arise from their long established habits of idolatry, and their prejudices in its favor as a national religion? Doubtless these systems of idolatry served greatly to swell the tide of human corruption, as do error and crime of every description, when systematized. But to count their idolatry the originating cause of their opposition to Christ, is substituting

the *effect* for the *cause*. The depraved heart originated all the abominable rites of ancient as well as modern paganism. The human heart is the foul kennel where this monster was brought forth, and where too he has been nourished until he has grown to that enormity of power, and that cruelty of purpose, that he, this very moment while I speak, wields the dark sceptre of hell over more than five hundred millions of our fellow beings. I draw this as the characteristic picture of the human heart, on the authority of Christ and his servant Paul: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts." When they knew God, they glorified him not as God; and forasmuch as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, he gave them over to vile affections.

The gospel presents a scheme of salvation which *confounds the pride of human intellect*. This furnishes a source of opposition to its truths in every age. The combined efforts of the loftiest minds which ever upon earth wielded the machinery of human reasoning, when directed to the enquiry how God can be just, and yet justify him that believeth, though indulged with the amplest opportunity for experiment, have utterly failed. To remove the impenetrable veil which hung over this problem, like the accomplishment of the project of the philosopher of Syracuse, required what the store-house of nature could not furnish. And now, when God has laid in Zion a sure foundation, a tried corner stone, shall the foolish builders reject it? Now that he has

mercifully put forth his own Almighty arm, and removed the veil, shall proud mortals refuse to look upon the unfolding glory, and receive the blessedness of its light, because they could not lift the veil themselves, nor comprehend the wonders revealed ? Shame on thee, proud mortal ! Let thy pride be abased, and thy vain reasonings be silent, when Jehovah speaks. “Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” “God will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”

Again: *the gospel pronounces men to be in a state of guilt and condemnation.* To be accused of some few venial imperfections has never excited much opposition. But to be told, their moral affections were wholly wrong, and the ways they most love are the ways of condemnation, and while they pursue them, the wrath of Almighty God is upon them ; this must be strongly repulsive to the pride of man’s heart in every age. There is indeed something deeply mortifying to human nature in the thought, that such is man’s guilt, such violations has he made of that law which is holy, just, and good, and such a deadly example of rebellion has he set up in the universe, the perfections of the Deity, and the moral order of the universe can in no way be maintained but by the sacrifice of God’s dear Son. Oh, there is a voice from Calvary which speaks louder and more emphatically of man’s de-

praved and miserable condition as a sinner, than is heard in any other dispensation of Jehovah ! Hence it is now as formerly, the proud heart of man cannot bear to look that way. It prays that the voice may not be spoken to it any more!—it would blot out the mortifying scene from the universe.

There is yet another cause of opposition. *Man never possesses correct views of Christ, till illuminated by the Spirit of God.* His pride, sensuality, and unbelief crowd his mind with prejudices. His spiritual vision is disordered, so that the glorious truths connected with a crucified Saviour, are presented in a distorted view. God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, must shine into his heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, or he never will correctly discern that glory. Paul, although he had doubtless heard of Christ from many a persecuted follower of his, yet meets him on the plains of Damascus, as a perfect stranger: “Who art thou Lord ?” he exclaims in surprise. His prejudices are dissipated, his pride abased, and new views break in upon his astonished mind. It was of this time he spoke when he said, “it pleased God to *reveal his Son in me.*” Does not daily observation testify that men hold in comparatively little estimation the character and the atonement of Christ, till they receive spiritual illumination ?*

* “I remember the time,” says a pious and sensible writer, “even after I became really serious in religion, when I could not

The grand characteristic features of the human heart are the same in every age and country: they no more change than the features of the countenance. Its opposition to the doctrines of the cross may have different ways of manifesting itself, like opposition to any other subject. Idolatry among the pagans was one channel, and an undue attachment to the Mosaic ritual, and rabbinical impositions among the Jews, another channel, through which the depravity of man flowed out. As pointed hostility to the gospel may be manifested by *disobeying*, or *perverting* its great truths, as by rejecting the gospel itself. The very same heart which in one age attacks the gospel avowedly, may in the next acknowledge the gospel, in a general way, but attack its great essential truths. Indeed, what is the bible but a revelation of certain great truths or doctrines? In these the Son of God now presents himself to sinful men; and just as they treat the divine glories of his character, the atonement made by his sufferings, and his testimony concerning their guilty, perishing condition, rendering necessary the propitiatory death of such a being, so will he deem himself treated. These slighted by us, and our sin is like that of the Jews and the Greeks to whom Christ crucified became a stumbling block and foolishness. And how

understand what St. Paul meant—not by setting forth the glory of Christ, but in talking of him in such hyperbolical terms, and always dwelling on the subject; on whatever topic he began, I saw he could not but glide into the same subject. But now I understand why he did so, and wonder no more.”—*Cecil's Remains.*

shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation !
There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.

III. Its efficacy in saving men.

The gospel arrays before the mind of man the most powerful motives in the whole universe of God. It is the Holy Spirit's peculiar weapon ; and under his agency, it is in this dark world, like the almighty fiat of Jehovah, "Let there be light, and there was light."

Men may laugh at this theme, but they know not at what they laugh. They can comprehend and applaud the wisdom and power of *man* ; but the natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness to him.

This is the power of *God* and the wisdom of *God* : and as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts. What may we not expect from a method of saving men which the *wisdom* of God has devised, from a faithful employment of an instrument which *he* has *appointed*, and *promised* to bless ? The glory of the infinite God is pledged to give it success. He has made a mighty movement in the universe, to re-conquer this revolted province : not to disable these rebels, and shut them up in his eternal prison—this he could have done by a flood of waters, or a storm of fire : not to send them back into non-existence—this he could have accomplished by the blast of his mouth. It was to achieve a far nobler victory ; to *disarm the heart of its hostility*,

and, for a principle of enmity, to implant a principle of *love* in the breasts of unnumbered millions.

In view of all the hosts of heaven, Jehovah gives up his *equal Son, Christ Jesus*, to humiliation, toil, reproach and death; and, with the universe as witnesses, he has ordained *preaching this Christ crucified* as the grand means by which he would accomplish this end. Now, shall the means fail? Through the inroads of error, the machinations of the devil, or the hardness of the human heart, shall the preaching of the cross become of none effect? No, answer the angels who lean from heaven to catch the first gleamings of repentance in the wounded sinner. No, answer the myriads of the redeemed who surround the throne of Him that was dead and is alive—we have felt its almighty efficacy. No, responds the whole church militant, as she rises on the wings of faith, and joy beams from her eye.

Paul does not say it was by the force of *miracles* he entered the conflict with earth and hell: *Christ crucified* filled his whole vision, and flowing from his tongue in strains of heavenly eloquence, carried to the bosom a conviction more powerful than that of a miracle. It spoke to the heart, and made the awakened hearer feel that it was a message from *him who knew what was in man*. Jerusalem first saw its triumphs; and on a day to be had in eternal remembrance, three thousand trophies were won from the god of this world. With unwearied perseverance was it brought to the test of experiment on the hu-

man heart, and marvellous was its success. The influence of wealth and power, the stupidity of ignorance, and the pride of philosophy, were arrayed against it; the bloody sword of persecution was drawn; the fires of death were kindled; the exasperated Jew was sworn for its extinction; and the dark thrones of paganism, as they frowned and trembled, sent forth their horrid execrations. Unawed, the little band spread themselves, and move onward, carefully using only the weapon their Master had given them, and in the way he had prescribed; converts are multiplied as the drops of morning dew. The glad tidings reach Samaria; thousands leap from spiritual bondage, to enjoy the liberty of the sons of God. This foolishness and weakness of God, is found to be, every where, wiser and stronger than the wisdom and strength of men.

The wall of adamant, which Jewish prejudice had erected, melts away before it. Churches are planted in all the chief cities throughout Asia Minor, Greece and Italy: even imperial Rome, though in pouring forth her indignation, she became drunk with the blood of Christ's faithful martyrs, was invaded by the soldiers of the cross, and furnished trophies of grace even from the palace itself. Thus victory upon victory was achieved, till idolatry fled from half the known world in dismay, and christianity in triumph ascended the throne of the Cæsars.

Nor have eighteen centuries wasted its strength. Go with the lonely Brainard to the tribes of the west.

They cluster around this man of God. He can convey these truths to their minds in no way but through an ignorant heathen interpreter. But behold the *power of God*, and the *wisdom of God* ! these savages weep, repent, and become new creatures ! Behold the ferocious Africaner ; more dreaded through all South Africa than the tiger that roams those deserts. He broke the bow of steel, and laughed at the shaking of the spear ; but he bows under the sword of the Spirit. The simple missionary approaches proclaiming Christ crucified for the sins of the world, and lo, this blood-thirsty pagan is seen sitting at the foot of the cross, clothed and in his right mind.

Within thirty years, by the instrumentality of a few missionaries, this heavenly theme has converted more than one hundred thousand hardened and polluted idolaters into the humble worshippers of the true God. Rescuing from the altar of blood, and extinguishing the blazing pile before the eyes of the trembling victim. Over more than half a score of islands in the Pacific, where barbarism and licentiousness reigned unchecked and without a parallel, the altar and the priest, the temple and its rites, have vanished together, and, under the creating power of the gospel, you behold a new heaven, and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

But I cannot dwell on these recent victories of Immanuel ; he is bowing his heavens around us ; his sword is upon his thigh. His summons to high

and holy enterprize has reached the ear of his slumbering church, and through all her scattered ranks is heard, onward ! O, how bright the vision which rises before every faithful servant of the Lord Jesus ! Success is certain. Though earth and hell oppose, he may go forth fearlessly to the conflict. On the banner which waves over his head is inscribed, "*The power of God and the wisdom of God.*"

My friends, do you discover the power of God and the wisdom of God in these triumphs of redeeming mercy ? Do you love to linger around that cross on which Jesus poured out his richest blood for your salvation, and which once filled the universe with astonishment ? The crucified Saviour has now a throne in heaven, has he a throne in your hearts ? Do you long to fall down at his feet, and with the four and twenty elders, and all his redeemed saints, ascribe blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving unto his name forever ? Close your eyes on the glories which blaze around this cross, and you close them in eternal night !

We see, in view of our subject, that those, who are willing to make sacrifices that *Christ crucified* may be faithfully preached in every village, and to all the dwellers on the earth, possess that wisdom that cometh from above. The religion of such men is the religion of Paul, their views the views of Paul. He, with the Jewish world, their errors and inveterate prejudices ; with the whole pagan world, all their abominations and long established

rites before him, pronounces the preaching of Christ crucified to be the *power of God* and the *wisdom of God*. And the loss of all things was he willing to suffer, even to bonds and death, that he might publish to them this gospel of the Son of God. Nothing else can ever humble the proud reasonings of man, and renovate an idolatrous world. This is adequate to the mighty achievement.

As its divine Author entered the Jewish temple, and drove out them that made merchandize there, and sanctified it, so this heavenly theme will purify every idolatrous temple, brake in pieces all their images, and inscribe upon their walls *Holiness unto the Lord*. As he, who ordained it for this high and holy purpose, stood over the grave of Lazarus, and bid him come forth from the sleep of death, so this gospel shall bend over the tomb of the whole heathen world, and bid the sleepers of spiritual death come forth to life and activity. In its march over the world, it has the sublimity and glory of rolling suns. Those who follow it with their prayers and blessings and alms, will be borne on to certain triumph. Its music is sweet as the harmony of heaven. At every step a voice is heard, "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." Before it the widow sits solitary, the orphan sighs, paganism wraps, three-fourths of the world in moral despair, the earth groans under the sin of its inhabitants. Behind it

the widow's heart sings for joy, the orphan lifts his hands to heaven in holy gratitude, the pagan rises from before his dumb idol, and exclaims, "The Lord, he is God, the Lord, he is God."

Friend of Immanuel, shrink not from efforts and sacrifices to advance its progress, and bring its blessings to every soul on the face of the earth; so will you manifest your faith in the appointment of heaven, and your love to the eternal interests of your fellow-men.

From the preceding remarks, the reasons for the erection of this neat and commodious edifice are obvious, as well as the great and holy purposes to which it is this day consecrated.

We wish to be perfectly open in the avowal of the motives which have actuated us in all that has here been done: we regard with interest and affection the inhabitants of this ancient town; but *this* is a business which takes hold on eternity. It is that these parents and children, these friends and neighbors with their unborn posterity may enjoy the faithful dispensation of those pure and holy truths which flowed from the lips of Christ and his inspired servant Paul: that there is one and but one living and true God; and that this one God has manifested himself as existing in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, according to the form of baptism which Christ taught his disciples, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of

the Holy Ghost ;”* and the apostolic benediction, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all ;”† the former of which is a most solemn and unreserved consecration of body and soul to each of the three persons in the Godhead ; the latter, a short prayer addressed to each of the same divine persons. That our Lord Jesus Christ took the human nature into union with his original and divine nature, according to the testimony of John ; *The Word was God—and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.* And also of Paul ; *He thought it not robbery to be equal with God—but took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.*‡ That he made a full and perfect atonement by his sufferings and death, *the Lord having laid on him the iniquity of us all ;* so that the violated law is *magnified and made honorable*, whilst every penitent believer in him, freely receives pardon and eternal life.|| That all men previous to regeneration, are destitute of any holy affections, and possess *that carnal mind which is enmity against God.*§ The consequent absolute necessity of regeneration for men of every class and every character if they would be prepared for heaven.¶ The personality of the Holy Spirit, and the necessity of his influences to convince men of

* Matt. 28 : 19.

† 2 Cor. 13 : 14.

‡ John 1. Philip. 2 : 6, 7.

|| Isaiah 53. 1 Pet. 2 : 24.

§ Rom. 8 : 7. Jer. 17 : 9.

¶ John 3 : 3. 2 Cor. 5 : 17.

sin, to turn them from the power of Satan unto God, and induce them humbly to accept of pardon from a crucified Saviour, and with it great joy and peace in believing. This Spirit was promised by Christ *to reveal truth, and reprove the world of sin : he was resisted* by the unbelieving Jews ; and all are warned against *quenching and grieving his influences.** That there is an eternal heaven for the righteous, and a place of eternal punishment for the finally impenitent : according to our Saviour's declaration ; *These shall go away into eternal punishment : but the righteous into life eternal.†*

These are the leading doctrines which we believe are revealed in the bible ; which were preached with such glorious success at the era of the Reformation ; for the unmolested enjoyment of which, our pious forefathers planted the colonies of New-England ; and which have proved, wherever they have been faithfully preached, the *power of God, and the wisdom of God*, to the pulling down of the strong holds of error and of sin. It is not personal disaffection ; it is not jealousy, rivalry, or party spirit in any of its forms, which has constituted the leading principle in organizing this church, and erecting this house. If we are not greatly deceived, the friends of this holy enterprize, have gone on the great and sacred principle of conscience. Not, however, a conscience scrupulous about the minor points of religion. Were it

* John 14 : 26. 16 : 7, 8. Acts 7. 51. 1 Thess. 5 : 19. Eph. 4 : 30.

† Matt. 25 : 46.

a matter of mere modes and forms, I would not stand here to-day. It is in our view of *vital interest*; one of absolutely *life* and *death* to these parents and their children, and their children's children—whether they shall surrender the great sanctifying and saving truths of the gospel, or bind them to their hearts as their dearest treasure.

Such is human depravity, such are the temptations of the flesh and of the world, that there has been evident in every age, a strong tendency in the church, especially after seasons of distinguished prosperity, to trust in her own strength; consequently to become lax both in her doctrines and discipline, and ultimately to sink down to the level of the surrounding world. "We ought, therefore, to give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard, lest at any time we should let them *slip*."

Cast your eye over the history of the churches, planted by apostolic labor, and observe their gradual departure from the faith, and decline in vital piety; till the clear light of truth burst forth under the spiritual preaching of Luther, Calvin, Knox, and other holy and zealous servants of the most high God.

The churches in Germany, after enjoying for a season the labors of the most illustrious reformers, and shedding upon the nations a heavenly light, began to indulge the spirit of pride and self confidence. The spirit and power of religion fled. Errors began to creep into the universities, and to be disseminated among the clergy and laity. At first, only

Christ's absolute *equality* with the Father was denied; then his *atonement*, and the *personality* of the Holy Spirit. Finally, our blessed Saviour becomes but a mere man; the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures is discarded, and reason, short sighted, changeful, and easily biassed by a corrupt heart, becomes the arbiter of duty and of faith. But, praised be God, that he has begun even in Germany, to turn again the captivity of his people, by opening the eyes of many, and making his truth quick and powerful.

Alas ! that there should be such melancholy examples of this tendency to decline in doctrinal views, and pious zeal, around the very graves of the puritans. The Rev. Charles Chauncey, who, about the middle of the seventeenth century, was a distinguished president of Harvard University, was in the constant habit of solemnly admonishing his theological students to "beware of those doctrines which *exalt man and debase Christ*." And this was a favorite maxim with him, "The doctrine of the sinner's justification by the atoning blood of Christ *lost*, and the *gospel is lost*."* Would God, the monitory voice of this pious president had been heeded by all our ministers and churches ! What a lustre of truth and holiness might the churches of New-England have shed upon the world !

Such were the holy evangelical men, breathing the very spirit and sentiment of Paul in my text, who

* Mather's Magnalia, vol. 1. p. 426.

filled nearly every pulpit in New-England for more than a century after the landing of our fathers at Plymouth. These are the doctrines, under which the energy of character, the enlightened and expanded views, the regular habits and the noble institutions of New-England, were formed and matured.

We do not rejoice in contentions and divisions, considered in themselves. God forbid ; rather do we deeply mourn over the exigency that demands them. But there is a point where compromise with error, whatever be the inducement, is *treason* against heaven. Christ peremptorily commands his people to come out from the world and be separate ; and declares that if a man is not willing to forsake father and mother, and all that he hath, and to take up his cross and follow him, he cannot be his disciple. And to his servants, found in a corrupt church, he issues his mandate from heaven, "*Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins.*"*

There are then evils, even in the view of Christ, the *Prince of peace*, infinitely more to be deprecated than those which might arise from a firm disavowal of, and a conscientious withdrawal from, erroneous opinions and practices in the great concern of salvation. The time is but recent when in many sections of our religious community it was neither day nor night ; a state of things most favorable to error, but most inauspicious to truth. It

* Rev. 18, 4.

is now nearly gone by, and things are manifesting their appropriate lineaments. If the religious system ever existed which the Holy Ghost marks as another gospel, it is our settled and sacred belief that the *Unitarian*, as generally received and preached among us, is that system. Still we have no anathemas to deal out against its adherents; they are our brethren in the same great human family, and bound to the same bar of judgment. We give utterance to this our conviction of their dangerous error in no other spirit than that of faithful and affectionate solicitude. We trust there are not a few sealed of God among those who are in a measure paralyzed with this error: they have been insensibly led, step by step, away from "*the faith once delivered to the saints.*" Many of this description are becoming alarmed on a comparison of the *present* with the *past* and with the *Bible*. It may not be too late to save themselves and their children. Some may be placed in circumstances of extreme embarrassment for a season: but let them ponder the Divine Word with incessant supplication, submitting themselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and soon the light of the morning shall break upon their path. And let it be distinctly remembered that the cause of contention is not on *our* part, but on *theirs* who have forsaken the holy doctrine and discipline of the pious founders of these New-England churches. Can they then cry *schism*, and load us with reproach, because we will

take our stand on the good old *tried* ground of Puritanism and truth, and decline following them through the *untried* paths of dubious and bewildering error? We feel that our feet stand on the broad foundation of the gospel. We most cordially invite them back to this only refuge for the guilty and the lost.

Sooner must we renounce all claim to the spirit of Christ, and love to souls, than cease to rejoice in the prospect that ere long, in all the churches planted by the prayers and labors of our pious forefathers, those doctrines will again be preached which will be accompanied by the effusions of the Holy Ghost, and will draw sinners to Christ. It may cost many a hard fought battle, much time and sacrifice and toil; but is there not at least a remnant in all these churches of the pilgrims, to whom the name and the blood of a *divine Saviour* are still precious; and who, that they and their offspring may enjoy his glorious gospel in all its quickening power, are willing to count *all things but loss*?

My brethren and friends, you have been called to make unusual sacrifices, to endure, doubtless, much reproach, and a severe trial of your firmness and attachment to the truth. Be it so; the cause in which you are embarked is worthy. The scenes of the judgment day will convince the whole universe, that the cause is worthy.

The Lord excited in you the enquiry, Where shall we find a holy resting place, where we and our

children can be fed with the bread of life? You heard the God of your fathers saying to you in his word and providence, "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build a house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord."* Your hearts were ready to reply, we are few and our hands are feeble, how can we build the Lord's house? Again the Lord answered you, the silver and the gold are mine; arise and build, and the God of heaven will prosper his servants. You obeyed, and his faithfulness has not failed.

This then shall be a house for God. Unto Thee, O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we anew and solemnly dedicate this *pulpit*; may it ever be filled with those and only those, who like Paul shall preach Jesus Christ and him crucified. To Thee we solemnly dedicate the *baptismal font* here to be opened: by its side may parents rejoice in thine everlasting covenant, and all who receive the holy seal be baptized with the Holy Ghost. To Thee we solemnly consecrate this *sacramental board*: may thy people, as they surround it, sit together in heavenly places in Christ, and have that faith which shall discern the Lord's body. To Thee we would most solemnly devote these *seats*; praying that they may be filled with those who shall worship Thee in spirit and in truth. To Thee, O Jehovah, we would heartily devote this *whole edifice*: may its walls be salvation, and its gates praise; and here may the cloud of thy

* Haggai 1:8.

glory ever rest. Now, O Holy Father, be Thou present to adopt all those who worship within these walls, into thy blessed family. O God, the Son, be Thou present with thine atoning blood, to pardon and redeem. God, the Spirit, dwell here to apply the word and ordinances, to convince of sin, to comfort and sanctify the believer. Arise, O Lord, into thy rest, Thou and the ark of thy strength. Let thy priests be ever clothed with salvation, and thy saints shout aloud for joy.

O, what unutterable scenes are here opening upon us! This house is as the portals of eternity. The gospel is here to prove a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. Characters are to be formed for an immortal existence. The everlasting purposes of redeeming mercy are to be accomplished. Multitudes from these seats shall ascend to mingle with cherubim and seraphim, and rise from glory to glory through eternal ages: whilst others will probably shut their eyes against the blazing light of truth, quench the spirit, and sink down to endless woe under a condemnation awfully aggravated. "How dreadful is this place!" The veil of the future world is drawn aside, and visions of glory and of woe rise upon my view.

Dear brethren, live together in love; be eminently spiritual and holy; meek, yet firm; contend earnestly for the faith, but only with spiritual weapons; and may you enjoy in this sanctuary many foretastes of heaven, and meet at last, on

Mount Zion above, thousands who were saved from woe through your sacrifices, and be permitted to sing with them the song of Moses and the Lamb forever and ever! AMEN.

NOTE.

The Corner-Stone of the 2d Congregational Meeting-house was laid on the 22d day of May, A. D. 1826 ; on which occasion an appropriate address was made by the Rev. Asa Rand, of Boston. It was *dedicated* on the 6th day of December following, at which time the foregoing Sermon was preached. The other performances were as follows ; Introductory prayer and reading the Scriptures, by Rev. Samuel Stearns, Bedford ; Dedicatory Prayer, by Rev. John Codman, D. D. Dorchester ; Concluding Prayer, by Rev. Sewall Harding, Waltham.